

sandhill community, there is no oak understory. Coastal sweet-pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*) and dwarf huckleberry (*Gaylussacia dumosa*) are prominent in the shrub layer, while wiregrass and reindeer lichen are important components of the ground layer.

Carolina bays and other low areas in the site with permanently saturated soils support the Pond Pine Woodland pocosin community. Pond pine (*Pinus serotina*) forms a moderately dense canopy over an open understory of loblolly bay (*Gordonia lasianthus*) growing with smaller pond pines. The dense shrub layer is dominated by fetterbush (*Lyonia lucida*) and gallberry (*Ilex coriacea*). Herbs are sparse to absent. Tuliptree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) is prominent in the canopy of the uncommon Streamhead Pocosin community, with loblolly bay an important component in the understory. Similar to the Pond Pine Woodland community, the dense shrub layer is dominated by fetterbush and gallberry.

Pridgen Flats Pine Forests natural area has areas of moderately dense canopies and dense shrubs layers intermixed with areas of sparse canopies, patchy shrub layers, and moderate to dense herb layers. These conditions provide home and foraging habitat for several animal groups, with the sandhill understory oaks providing mast for game animals. This site is an important component of a critical landscape connection between southern Sampson County and extensive longleaf pine, swamp, and pocosin habitat in eastern Bladen County and western Pender County.

MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION: Frequent prescribed burns (every three to five years is recommended) will greatly benefit the longleaf pine communities and reduce wildfire fuel loads. Prescribed burns should be allowed to burn into the adjacent bay and streamhead pocosin communities wherever possible. This site has no protection status.

NATURAL COMMUNITIES: Pond Pine Woodland, Streamhead Pocosin, Wet Pine Flatwoods Wet Spodosol Variant, Xeric Sandhill Scrub Coastal Plain Variant.

RARE PLANTS: Watch List: naked golden-aster (*Chrysopsis trichophylla*), yellow hatpins (*Syngonanthus flavidulus*), savanna yellow-eyed-grass (*Xyris brevifolia*).

RARE ANIMALS: Watch List: southeastern fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger*).

REFERENCES:

LeBlond, R.J., and G.S. Grant. 2006. Site survey report: Pridgen Flats Pine Forests. N.C. Natural Heritage Program, Office of Conservation and Community Affairs, DENR, Raleigh, N.C.